

Welcome to the Black & Pink Newspaper!

The Black & Pink “free world” leadership circle is so excited to be sending you this newspaper. Up until now, we’ve spent a good deal of our volunteer effort and donations on printing, folding, stuffing and stamping the paper copies each month. For several months, the MA Trans Political Coalition printed our copies (thank you!). It took 5 to 20 people spending three or so hours folding and stuffing newsletters into envelopes. As the word spread about the power of the Black & Pink family, we received hundreds and hundreds of requests to be added to the newsletter mailing list and to receive a “free world” pen-pal. A volunteer offered us the use of the folding and stuffing machine at her office, where two people could fold the mailing in 4 hours. Before she left that job, she



arranged the donation of a folding and stuffing machine for Black & Pink to own!! While we are very grateful to have this powerful tool, our limited funds means that there is limited maintenance of it, and it has led to more than a few headaches. We will still use it for sending out small batches of mail, like responses to your letters. Therefore, at the 2013 retreat, we came up with the idea to have a company distribute the newsletter as a newspaper, relieving volunteers of the printing/folding/stuffing/stamping duties and freeing us up to spend more time doing what we love to do--write to you! We’re also so happy to have nearly doubled the space available for stories, poems, and artwork. Please do send us your work to share with the entire Black & Pink family! Thanks to Santos V. for the illustration at the top. While this is a combined January/February newspaper, we aim to make it a monthly publication from here on out.

Volunteers in Boston happily meet each week to read and respond to hundreds of your letters!

Dear Black & Pink,
The Newsletter lends strength to my will to survive this incarceration- thank you all. And to my sisters and brothers behind bars, a poem just for you:

Hope

Flowers bend
as the wind blows
But when the storm has gone,
they reach toward
the sky once again.
Just as you will one day.

Wishing you all hope.

Love,
Dee Dee, New York

Last prisoners leave Tamms ‘supermax’ prison

The Associated Press, 7:08 p.m. CST, December 28, 2012, title modified

One of the more contentious episodes in the history of Illinois penitentiaries ended Friday as the last inmates held at the “supermax” prison in Tamms moved out and Gov. Pat Quinn’s administration prepares to shut it down.

The final five inmates at the high-security home for the “worst of the worst” were shipped to the Pontiac Correctional Center, a prison spokeswoman said. Among the last to leave was a convict who helped lead a prison riot in 1979 and stabbed serial killer John Wayne Gacy while on death row. Also bused out of the southern Illinois city were four dozen residents of the adjoining minimum-security work camp, packed off to Sheridan Correctional Center in north-central Illinois.

The departures mark the end of a nearly 15-year experiment with the super maximum-security prison, which supporters say the state still needs for troublemaking convicts — particularly during a time of record inmate population. But opponents contend the prison’s practice of near-total isolation was inhumane and contributed to some inmates’ deteriorating mental health. More than 130 inmates were moved out of the prison in just nine days, after the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that legal action by a state workers’ union could no longer hold up the governor’s closure plans. The state has offered to sell the \$70 million facility the federal government, but there are no solid plans for the future of the prison, often simply called Tamms.

“It’s sad for our area, but we’re never going to give up,” said Rep. Brandon Phelps, a Democrat from Harrisburg whose district includes Tamms. “We still have an overcrowding problem. That’s the deal with this. The governor has made it worse. Eventually, some of these facilities are going to have to reopen.” But activists opposed to the prison’s isolation practices cheered Friday’s landmark moment. One organizer, Laurie Jo Reynolds, called the course to closure “a democratic process” that involved not high-priced lobbyists or powerful strategists but, “the people — truly, the people.” Shuttering Tamms is part of Quinn’s plan to save money. The Democrat said housing an inmate at the prison cost three times what it does at general-population prisons. He has also closed three halfway houses for inmates nearing sentence completion, relocating their 159 inmates, and plans to shutter the women’s prison in Dwight. But budget problems aside, critics note the state’s prison system has more than 49,000 inmates in space designed for 33,000, after losing the 700 beds in the two Tamms units. *(Remainder of article excluded due to space limits.)*

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The child of a man in Tamms made this card for all the prisoners who were there. Hope is alive!

*When I picture you smiling
I miss you so much it hurts.
I guess that’s How It Is
when you love someone
as much as I love you.
You’re on my mind and in my heart
all the time day in, day out
and I wouldn’t have it another way.
Just knowing you’re out there
and that before long
I’ll hold you and kiss you again
it helps me through the day.
I’m saving up so many things
to share with you
and laugh and talk about with you.
You’re at the heart
of so much that I do
and feel and care about.
Although we can’t be together
as much as I’d like
this love of ours
is worth waiting for.*

-Teddy, Illinois

Dear friends,

I hope 2013 is beginning as well as possible for all. We know there are still prisons, still solitary confinement cells, still abuse of our LGBTQ family, and yet we know that we are given a new year to keep building our movements and strengthen our fight. For Black and Pink that means all sorts of different projects for 2013; projects that need your brilliance, resilience, and creativity. It is through your leadership that Black and Pink will more effectively take part in the movement towards abolition.

Black and Pink recently announced that we were being fiscally sponsored by Queers For Economic Justice, in order to pursue some grant funding. Unfortunately the relationship with Queers For Economic Justice has not worked out but we did recently sign a new agreement with Out Now. Out Now is a LGBTQ youth organization in Springfield, MA. They do amazing social justice work and leadership development with queer young people. They have a group within their organization that specifically works to address the violence of the school-to-prison pipeline.



We are excited about this partnership!

We have also been able to apply for some grant money to cover costs of the newsletter (we keep growing, it’s wonderful, amazing, and expensive) as well as quite a few other budget costs. Just to be transparent with you all, we raised \$14,500 in grant money. We also have a number of financial contributors and had a very successful fundraising event with Angela Davis, Noam Chomsky, and Vijay Prashad, from which we got \$2,275. For the first time since the founding of Black and Pink we are not too stressed out about funding. I think it’s incredibly important to recognize that the reason people are willing to fund us is because of the great writing, sharing, strategizing, and organizing that you all make possible with your contributions towards this newsletter. Each month it costs about \$1,000 to put out the newsletter, and the words that you all write to make the letter valuable to one another is a big piece of what makes our efforts worth every dollar.

Other things to notice, advocacy requests are now to be sent to our office (see page 10). It’s important that it only be advocacy requests (not art, erotica, newsletter, pen-pal, etc.) because those won’t be responded to from the office address. Advocacy is available for issues regarding incarceration. Unfortunately we are unable to help with criminal cases, that is beyond our current capacity. We can respond on behalf of those held in solitary confinement, being denied access to hormones/HIV medication/general health care, sexual violence, guard abuse, etc. To address advocacy issues it’s most helpful if you detail how you’ve gone about addressing the situation already, whether that be filing grievances or reports. We can make phone calls, write letters, and put pressure on prison officials. You will also see in this month’s newsletter an opportunity for you to do some advocacy on behalf of another member of the Black and Pink family. This is your opportunity to write a letter on behalf of someone else, to show your care, solidarity, and commitment to each other. Thank you for taking the time and spending a stamp on writing a letter of support.

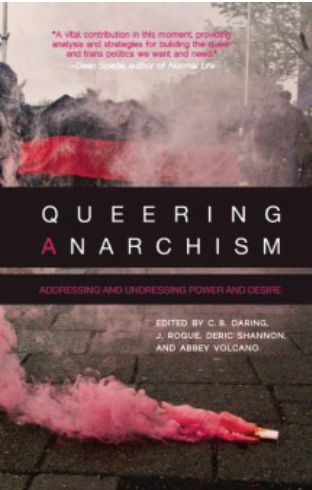
There are so many possibilities for this organizing effort and it’s through building trust and strength amongst each other. Do you know other people where you’re locked up who are part of Black and Pink? How can you organize together and support each other? Let’s stand with each other and build power knowing that once there were no prisons, that day will come again.

In loving solidarity,
Jason

Queering Anarchism: Addressing and Undressing Power and Desire

“What does it mean to “queer” the world around us? How does the radical refusal of the mainstream codification of GLBT identity as a new gender norm come into focus in the context of anarchist theory and practice? How do our notions of orientation inform our politics—and vice versa? Queering Anarchism brings together a diverse set of writings, ranging from the deeply theoretical to the playfully personal, that explore the possibilities of the concept of “queering,” turning the dominant, and largely heteronormative, structures of belief and identity entirely inside out. Ranging in topic from the economy to disability, politics, social structures, sexual practice, interpersonal relationships, and beyond, the authors here suggest that queering might be more than a set of personal preferences—pointing toward the possibility of an entirely new way of viewing the world.”

This book was published by AK Press on Dec. 31st, 2012. **Black and Pink’s own Jason Lydon contributed a piece titled: “Tearing Down the Walls: Queerness, Anarchism, and Abolishing the Prison Industrial Complex!”** To order this book for \$15 + S/H: AK Press, 674-A 23rd Street, Oakland, CA . Take 30% off direct to prisoners! “Please be aware that prisons have different regulations about what you can order. You are responsible to know those regulations and order accordingly. If items you order are rejected by the prison and returned to us, we will issue a credit memo for your purchase. However, if the prison does not return the order, we cannot issue a credit. Unfortunately, you order at your own risk. For free books, contact the Prisoners Literature Project c/o Bound Together, 1369 Haight St. San Francisco CA”



QuEST (QUeer Empowerment thru Solidarity and Truth) in Springfield, MA



QuEST is comprised of youth from Out Now, Springfield’s queer youth organization. Out Now (outnowyouth.org) is Black and Pink’s new Fiscal Sponsor! Fiscal Sponsorship by a non-profit organization is a requirement for receiving tax-free donations, including most grants. QuEST members are dedicated to educating ourselves and others of the intersections between queer youth and the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC).

QuEST strives to stop relying on incarceration as a way of solving our problems and to learn ways to resolve conflicts without revenge or violence. Our work is multidimensional in both content and methods. We have chosen to relay our message using both audio and visuals that speak to the work that we do in the office and in the community.

QuEST considers all of the interlocking systems of the PIC to be profiting off of the pain of people of color, poor people, queer people and other oppressed people. We work hard to combat oppression and create an equal society where we all strive for our individual and collective liberation.

Dear Black & Pink Family,

My name is Antaun aka Tiesha, I am a 23 year old bisexual inmate in North Carolina serving 8 years for Armed Robbery & Common Law Robbery. I currently have 22 months left on my sentence. It's really hard for me to cope because I don't know how to come out of the closet to let my family & friends know I'm bisexual.

I'm pretty sure my family suspects it because when I was younger (a little boy) I was caught in the act with other boys my age. I always denied it, saying it isn't what it looks like, or it's not true. Back in 2005 I almost got charged with statutory rape because I was caught in the act with a boy 2 or 3 years younger than I. Now that I'm in prison and see how inmates get criticized about their sexuality, I have fear of being disowned not only by other inmates but also by my own family and friends. I don't know what to do.

I have a psychologist I talk to, I wonder if I should admit this to him? I've already admitted it to myself, I just need to know my next step. I must admit I was surprised when I received these Newsletters about different LGBTQ, and it made me come out to you my new family about myself. I'm glad I did it because it relieved some of my stress. Thank you very much for your support!

Sincerely Yours,
Tiesha, North Carolina

Dear Black & Pink,

This is Kisha aka Kiki and I'm down here doin' time in Oklahoma. I was born Dante. When I came out in 2007, some was shocked and left me alone. And some was cool with it but didn't understand why.

I told them like this. For people to have respect for you, you have to be able to keep it real with yourself. Well, that's just how I would respect others. If I'm gonna look up to you and respect your advice, you can't be hiding stuff from me that need to be out on the table.

I've always been into helping people and I hate a liar. I have good advice after being locked up for over 22 years. And my name goes a long way in the fence and razor wire world. And I speak the truth. I got respect in here. And a lot of old schools will tell these youngsters coming in and seeing me for the first time, "Kiki is gay, not a punk. For we look at a punk and see a person who is weak. Kiki is far from being weak." And the youngsters listen to them and they start to listen to me.

I never thought that coming out would feel so good. I thought people would lose respect for me. God sees people who stand up for what they believe in. If it's good, He sends followers. Followers that believe in you. And you see it also. Look at how many write ya'll. And will keep writing.

Way to start a movement!
Love your Sis,
Kiki aka Kisha, Oklahoma

We are honored to be building the movement with you all! -B&P Free World

Dear Black & Pink family,

I Tony am so grateful to get letters from yall because it brightens my day while I'm in prison. It's a shame to hear that in 2012 we still got homophobic people still brutally murdering homosexuals because of sexual orientation. Thats just plain evil and those people need to burn in hell. Hate crimes are a serious issue in America and it hurts me to my heart because I'm African descent and a beautiful person whose only goal is to better human life! Yes in the past I did make serious mistakes that caused me to come to prison but I'm seriously working on my addiction for fast money! Yes I truly believe that the greed for money can be a route to evil. But it's not always a route to ALL evil!!!! Why? Because even though I like fast money I will not go to the extreme and take someone's life for money. I know in the long run we can get the money back, but a life we can't get that back. So I'm learning to resort to civilized ways to achieving money instead of robbing.

Black & Pink my goal is to help the Black & Pink family become a more healthier conscientious people so we can survive mentally, emotionally and physically forever. My motto is this; life is precious and death is unnatural. I truly believe that the Supreme Intelligence did not create the human race to live a few years and then become extinct through death!!! The creator is not that evil to play evil games like that to his creation. I truly believe that the creator desires all good people abundant, health and physical everlasting life on Earth! Science is proving today that in reality death is unnatural to the Human Being. The heart was created to pump eternally; provided we human beings followed natural laws!!!

I didn't mean to cut yall off when revealing my philosophy on life; but I did that so I can explain in detail in my next letter to the Black & Pink family. Life is beautiful and I truly love the Black & Pink family and may the creator bless us to move on in a loving caring intelligent manner.

Love, Tony

December 11, 2012

Dear Black & Pink Family,

Hey what's going on? I had just started getting the first issue of the B&P Newsletter. And let me say that some of the stories really open my eyes to a lot of things and touched my heart. I guess let me share my little journey with you. I am 24 years old and I've been in prison since I was 16 years old and it's been a long journey for me. Well, I haven't had no contact with my family since I been in prison 'cause they are all overseas, and I don't think they know I am in prison at the moment. I been really doing this time by myself, so all of you that don't have no family support you understand how I feel. Well, the last 4 years, I became bi-sexual, and I started messing around with other gay men. Something I would "never ever" think I would do ever in my life! This is how it all started.

I was about 19 at the time, and they had moved a guy in my cell by the name of Chris. He was really an Undercover gay guy, you know, he didn't want nobody messing with him so he just kinda hid it. We started talking one day and he told me that he was gay and didn't want me to tell nobody and that he thought I was the cutest thing he ever seen. So I was like OMG!! I told him that I did not get down like that and at the time I was gang related so you know I could NOT do all the gay stuff. So one night we started talking and sharing our stories about the free world, and our lives, and what got us here to prison, etc. So this guy was telling me that he is willing to be my friend after he gets out and help me out and stuff so I thought that this friend of mine was actually kool. 'Cause you don't never meet somebody like this in prison. So he started being more out around me and acting more feminine. So my cellie said that I was a sexy Asian guy and this and that, and that he really really liked me, and he asked if I wanted to have some fun when the lights go out. He told me that he can do all the things I think a female can do. I was like hmmm... alright. Next thing, my shorts were off, LOL. Since then I always like gay guys. And I am coming up for Parole soon and this guy is at home now and he wants to be with me and help me with my parole situation. I really don't know if this is the life I want to live out there, I mean being gay or bisexual. I don't even know what to tell my family either. But this guy has been there for me over the years since he went home. I don't know what the gay life is like out there, and I'm from a big city too. I've got to figure some things out with other people's help.

I hope that you all enjoy my story. And I want to thank all of you for giving me the courage to write this and I want to thank Black & Pink for helping us get through our problems and troubles in here. Thanks to you all.

xoxoxo
J., Texas

My Dear Friends and Family,

It's me, Jesse again, with news of encouragement to my fellow gay brothers, lesbian sisters, trannys, queers, and all gender preferences alike who are doing time behind bars and facing the stings of persecution, discrimination, and hatred.

Right now I'm facing a lot because a guard had lied on me, stating that I attempted to spit on him. My friend, Tank, saw the whole thing go down and was my witness, but it was an officer's word against two offenders, so I was disciplined for something I didn't do. My brother, Ray, told me to fight back- fight for what's right- so I'm doing just that, and I'm about to file a lawsuit as soon as my grievances are answered and within the two-year period.

Everyone knows that I'm gay- that is a given at this unit. In 2004 I came out of the closet, raised my multi-colored flag high and proud. I lost friends who were not friends, but those who truly were accepted me for who I am, not for who I was attracted to. I feel so much better not having to hide my true feelings about my sexual preferences, and if someone can accept me even though I'm labeled under a minority, then I feel blessed to have that person as a friend. "Come out, come out, wherever you are," said an editor from one of my magazines. Some of us are having a hard time in prison because of "labels," but we have to show them that we will not let our identity render us as vulnerable. Stick together, stick together, and as intertwined cords we can form a unity unfathomable and be unbreakable.

I was locked up to hear about my friend dying of a brain hemorrhage after being hit in the head with a lock a couple years back. He was gay and got jumped on because he basically refused to have sex with a certain group of guys. Joey, baby boy, we'll always remember you for your bravery- for having the gall to stand up and say no.

For this, I say, unity. In prison there is turmoil between many gays for want of attention. Reality check- if someone doesn't like you for who you are on the inside, he or she is just using you for his or her own pleasure. Have respect for yourself and your gender, and don't forsake the gay community for a worthless, egotistical person.

Brothers & Sisters, be proud of yourselves for who you are and come out and fight for your beliefs. If you're being persecuted or harassed, find a more experienced homosexual/bisexual/etc who is aware of such matters and can help. I won't take the beating, and neither should you.

-Jesse, Texas

Dear Black & Pink Family,
November 10, 2012

Thank you for your generous, loving support. Transprisoners are often so isolated and insulated from our community that we may as well be on another planet. Despite my twenty years of advocacy, I was unaware of Black & Pink until Reed (and Johannes) contacted me after OUR long-awaited victory in Federal court.

I was particularly touched by the published article that celebrated this important milestone, and the plea to the LGBTQ community to be inspired rather than divided, due to my status as a prisoner. Our LGBTQ identities and inherent dignity are the most precious of gifts. Any schism within our family automatically becomes a weapon

for our detractors, fueling the hatred that has kept so many on a diaspora in a family that should have always felt like home. We are better than that.

To any who may have been manipulated into seeing me as less than human, or unworthy of being a member of our family because of the crime I was convicted of, I stand by my truths; I was seduced out of a residential drug treatment center by my therapist, who later tried to kill me with a butcher knife after throwing boiling water on me. I killed her in self-defense. After twenty-three years, I expect to get a new trial next year. All you need to know is in my recently published memoir, Grace’s Daughter. It’s published as an e-book by smashwords.com, also available through other e-book retailers.

In Solidarity,
Michelle Lynne Kosilek, Massachusetts



Dear Black & Pink,

I’m a transsexual incarcerated in Texas. I want to thank you and Jessica from Texas about the G-51.11 article in the November Newsletter. I’m definitely going to look into that, thanks. A little about myself. I’m a 37 y.o. Transgender. I grew up knowing I wanted to be a girl. In fact when I was 11 years old, I started developing breasts. When I was in the fifth grade I went to school one day, and went up in front of the class. As I was doing my report I developed a really noticeable wet spot over my left nipple. Talk about humiliating.

I grew up trying to hide my identity. My parents seemed not to notice, but my daddy would later tell me that I would’ve been a good daughter (this was before I came out). It kinda hurt to hear though, ‘cause I thought I was being manly. I got married to a wonderful woman. Being around her made me realize I needed to be me. So I told her. She was great about it at first. Our sex life shifted to her being more dominant. We had a lot of fun with toys. We’d go shopping together, we had a lot of fun. Until she made me up one night. Wow! What a transformation. For the first time I finally met me, and I loved me :) Not too long after that she decided to help me find a guy for my 27th birthday. I was really excited, overly excited. This ended up putting a strain on our marriage. She left a year later even though I didn’t go through the experience for her sake.

About a year after she left I met my first boyfriend Joshua. He was really sweet. I found I could be myself around him, which was great. But I was afraid to come out to everyone else. One night I had my babies over and was going to talk to him about slowly coming out, starting with my ex the next morning. One of my friend’s ex-girlfriends came over after she got off of work to talk to me about their break up. Joshua decided to leave and I never heard from him again. One of his friends said that he told her I was ashamed of him, which wasn’t even close to the truth. I was scared and ashamed of myself. Scared to tell everyone, and ashamed that I was hurting him.

A few months after this, I moved in with my parents. At this time I was taking over-the-counter hormone therapy. I had my special bag. It had my toys, hormones, bras, panties, and other stuff. I always had it hidden. Well my mother being nosy as she is found it. I came in and saw her showing my grandma my toys. I mean she had it out in her hand showing my grandma. I was crushed. I left for a few hours and came back later terrified of what my dad was going to do. To my surprise it was my dad that was more supportive than my mother. My daddy said he just wanted to see me finally happy. Since then my wife pulled a dirty trick to gain custody of our children, and I’m now doing 15 years in TDCJ. I come up for parole in June-Sept 2013. I’m praying for a good answer. So keep me in your prayers.

I do wonder about going through hormone therapy, I would like to know what sort of changes to expect. Will my hips widen? I’ve heard that transgender breasts don’t develop the same way. You know they say that our nipples stay the same. It’s just some stuff I’ve wondered about, I wanna know what to expect physically and emotionally.

Sincerely,
Kendra, Texas

Dear Black & Pink,

I just received the September 2012 Newsletter. It has been quite a while since I heard from you. Everything is understandable. There are a lot of things in my life that have changed since I heard from you last. Most of the things aren’t very good either. Let’s just say “as most people from this area already know” the Virginia System isn’t fair when it involves their prisoners. Most can see this in the Ophelia De’lonta’s case** (Ophelia De’lonta needs gender reassignment surgery. But the Virginia prison where she’s an inmate won’t pay for it. So she’s been trying to do it herself. *Note: Black & Pink reported on Ophelia’s case in the September 2012 Newsletter*). I do not know De’lonta directly but do know her indirectly through the news and talks throughout the system. De’lonta has a hard road and my heart goes out to her. I hope she finally gets the justice that’s long overdue for her.

Back to me! They just moved me to the Supermax- really the only one they have in VA. However, there is no need in getting into the reason because what is done is done and this isn’t the moral of the story. I have been thinking quite some time about my life, but even more since I spend most of my time locked down. Then your Newsletter came and confirmed all the things I have been thinking (it’s time to be myself). I am tired of acting like shit is roses. However, this seems easy but when I seem like I have prepared myself and am ready to go forward, something draws me back. Let me say a little about myself. I am 36 but look a lot younger. I work out everyday and am covered in tattoos. I take really good care of myself. I know fighting isn’t the answer to no one’s problems, but I am known as one of the baddest white boys around here. So please someone explain to me why it is so hard for me to say I am bisexual. I find it super hard to say this or live this. I have had a few relations in he past with transwomen, who I viewed as simply female. I mean beautiful is beautiful. I don’t wanna be one of them dudes that Jessie from Texas talked about who be shooting the notes secretly. I just really wanna live my life as me.

This story isn’t as complicated as most stories I have read. But I truly feel this has lead to some of my troubles in life. All because I am always hiding and trying to be something I am not. This isn’t fair to me or the people who love me. Some people who truly loved me I pushed away because of always wanting to hide or make up reasons to be distant when people are watching but loving and passionate when all alone. This isn’t a way for anyone to live. My years are counting down and soon I will be home. I want to be able to help people still on the inside because I know that having someone on the outside helps. The system doesn’t like to see loved ones pushing issues from the outside because free people can make people listen.

As for right now, I need some help myself- answers, support, love. It helps to have someone else to talk about these problems I bounce around in my head. More than anything I need a true friend. There is a song Amanda Perez sings called Angel, that’s what I need, everything she says in that song. Well B&P, thanks for your time, I made it as short as possible. I hope the new office space and volunteers are working out. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Shawn, Virginia



**** Ophelia De’lonta...Can Pursue Sex Change Lawsuit Against State**

“A federal appeals court on Monday 1/28/13 restored a lawsuit filed by a Virginia inmate who claims her constitutional rights were violated when prison authorities refused to evaluate her for a sex-change operation. The ruling by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals allows Ophelia De’lonta, born Michael A. Stokes, to pursue her suit dismissed in U.S. District Court in which she alleges she was denied adequate medical treatment by the Virginia Department of Corrections....A lower court judge dismissed her suit. On Monday, the appeals court held that although prisoners are not entitled to treatment of their choice, the treatment provided must be adequate to address a prisoner’s serious medical needs. Rebecca Glenberg, legal director of the ACLU of Virginia, said “the Court of Appeals recognized that prison officials may not arbitrarily refuse to consider sex-reassignment surgery.” The appeals court made it clear that it was not deciding whether she should prevail in lower court or to suggest any remedy -- presumably including surgery -- that might be in order should she win.

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Dear Black & Pink, November 18, 2012

I just received my first introductory letter and October 2012 Newsletter from Black & Pink, and I enjoyed it and look forward to future Newsletters and to possibly contributing.

I am a gay, HIV+ prisoner. I have been incarcerated with the MDOC for over 15 years. In April I was classified to administrative segregation pursuant to MDOC Policy Directive 03.04.120 “Control of Communicable Bloodborne Diseases” for an alleged sexual misconduct with another prisoner. The misconduct report was based upon the confidential statement of another prisoner who initially claimed that he placed my penis in his mouth for “10 seconds;” however, in a subsequent statement he categorically recanted and admitted that he had “lied” in his initial statement.

PD 03.04.120 contains an irrebuttable presumption that “actual or attempted sexual penetration” could transmit HIV. Prisoners who are found guilty of sexual misconduct that “could transmit HIV” are indefinitely confined to administrative segregation. In other words, HIV+ prisoners who are found guilty of sexual misconduct are permanently classified to administrative segregation. Further, PD 03.04.120 does not afford for any type of review of a prisoner’s confinement to administrative segregation.

Although I was diagnosed with HIV 20 years ago, I am on Atrilpa, I am medication adherent, and I have had “undetectable”/suppressed virus for the last 10 years. Thus, I contend that under the alleged facts- a 10 second oral encounter without exposure to semen or blood- HIV could not be transmitted and my indefinite classification to administrative segregation is unwarranted, and unconstitutional. I base this conclusion on scientific studies such as the “Swiss Report,” which indicate that HIV+ persons on antiretroviral therapy with undetectable virus are sexually non-infectious.

I am preparing a civil rights lawsuit. Black & Pink supporters can help in two ways: 1. Write a letter to the Deputy Director of the MDOC, or call or send an email if you can, and urge him to eliminate the presumption in PD 03.04.120 and afford prisoners classified to administrative segregation under the policy “meaningful review” of their status; and 2. Incarcerated Black & Pink supporters in other states send copies of their prison’s policies or regulations pertaining to the administrative segregation of HIV+ prisoners. If you can’t send copies of the policies or regulations, write the policy or regulation numbers, or describe in as much detail as you can the policies or regulations and your experiences, etc. I will use that information in my lawsuit, if favorable, to contrast the MDOC policy with.

I appreciate all the Black & Pink’s supporters’ assistance, and will provide updates when I can.

The Deputy Director can be contacted at:
Deputy Director T. Finco
PO Box 30003
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 335-1426

Sincerely,
John A. Dorn, #243869, Michigan

Editor’s Note: Please do write letters to this address if you are inspired to advocate for John. We cannot at this time publish John’s full address, due to the need to avoid “promoting inmate to inmate communication,” which can get the Newsletter banned by some prisons. You can send in your experiences and policies regarding administrative segregation of HIV+ people in prison to “B&P- Newsletter Submissions” and we can try and get them in the Newsletter.

Dear brothers and sisters at Black & Pink, December 14, 2012

I was placed on the mailing list for the Black & Pink newsletter. I received the first issue September 2012, and was anxiously looking forward to the October issue. And what did I get instead? A notice of rejection or impoundment of publication (Black & Pink Newsletter October 2012). And the reason for rejecting and impounding it? “It is dangerously inflammatory in that it advocates or encourages riot, insurrection, disruption of the institution, violation of department or institution rules;” and “It otherwise presents a threat to the security, good order, or discipline of the correctional system or the safety of any person.” So now I wonder if I will ever see another issue of the Black & Pink newsletter. The newsletter helps me in my everyday struggle against the Prison Industrial Complex. It shows me that it is nationwide. And I do not see how the B&P newsletter could cause rioting. This is a clear violation of right to admissible reading material. B&P has providing nothing “but” positive, and constructive advice and moral support. The Prison Industrial Complex does not want the masses knowledgeable, so they seek to censor what prisoners are allowed to receive. So obviously you are doing something right B&P. So continue to do that. And to all of my brothers and sisters incarcerated, keep your head up and never lose sight of the bigger picture. Prison Abolition, and bringing down the PIC. You are all in my heart and prayers. With love and solidarity, Greg, Florida

Dear Black & Pink, October 03, 2012

My name is Brittany F. Snow and I am 25 years old, currently incarcerated in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) in the Safe Keeping classification. I am a femme boy transitioning more in time, but it took a while because the peckerwoods made me want to be accepted as one of them. Because the way they tell it, if you’re not down with them and locked up and white, then you ain’t shit. Over time I broke free of the brainwashing and propaganda to blossom as the girl I always was. I got out and went to cross dressing half of the time, sometimes all the time. It made me feel some sort of escape from a life of failure after failure. I created a new identity/alter-ego for myself. Now I am back in prison but all the way out of the closet this time. I feel much more like I can breathe and good that people know me for who I really am. You only live once, and hopefully my story may inspire somebody to remove their mask. Let’s help each other heal and grow as individuals who can be open-minded towards others and see their truths as something to learn from and not to judge by.

-Brittany, Texas



Dear Black and Pink Family,

Greetings from Angola! I’m new to the B&P Fam, and I’m glad- and proud (!)- to be a part of the fam. I’m a 39 year old gay male fighting against the daily injustices and prejudices we gays face here. As a result of challenging wrongdoings by those who’ve taken the Civil Service Oath of Office to protect all confined to its institutions in the State of Louisiana, I’m targeted constantly, and my baby, whom I’ve been with for 4 years and 9 months, has been separated from me... presenting a new battle. I read all of your stories and my heart goes out to you. I don’t know any of you, but know that as a fellow openly gay incarcerated, my prayers are with you all. To my baby, I love you for never giving up the fight with me. You are the best!



Love and Peace,
Lester L., Louisiana

Terry C., Nevada

On Sunday January 13th, about a dozen people who are “free world” volunteers or supporters of Black & Pink met at The City School in Boston to reflect on our current programs and envision our family’s future direction. There are 15 pages of typed notes, so the table and text below is just a glimpse at what was discussed. Consider making a table yourself and mailing it to us under “developing leadership” to share!

| Program | Positive Aspect of Program | Critique of Program | Dream for Program! |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| Newsletter | Tool to engage prisoner members in participation (e.g. electing leadership) | Does not provide enough resources for folks who are recently or soon-to-be released | Do it as a newspaper! Make it larger, easier to distribute, more like a magazine. |
| Response to Mail | A welcoming, engaging activity for new volunteers. | We need to structure this to facilitate more inclusion of youth and people of color. | Having a wider range of mail processing spaces in Boston and nationwide. |
| Pen-Pal Outreach | We have 184 penpal pairs on our site. Penpal relationships serve as a harm reduction tool. | We need to be more clear about the expectations involved in a penpal relationship. | Advertise for Black and Pink penpals within more mainstream LGBTQ media with big readerships. |
| Abolitionist Analysis | Serves as a guiding liberatory principle based on the lived experiences of our members. | We need to be more clear about what abolition means and perhaps have a section on abolition in the newsletter. | We should include other forms of state repression and control like immigrant detention, deportation, and the war on terror. |
| Community Organizing | Allows us to work on important local campaigns and build relationships across organizations. | We need to include more formerly incarcerated people in the leadership and decision-making. | Develop a best practices and boundaries guide for working with reformist groups. |
| Leadership Structure | We were able to provide Captive Genders books to LC members behind bars. | Facilitate more equal decision-making power and more frequent communication between free world and incarcerated LC members. | Be able to have more regular tasks and projects for incarcerated LC members, perhaps establish phone communication. |
| Education | We lead multiple workshops at a wide variety of organizations. | We should try to engage youth more, and do workshops within schools, especially on the school-to-prison pipeline. | Develop a training resource kit so that anyone can facilitate our workshops. |
| Advocacy | We now have an advocacy request binder. We have a mixed history of successes and failures but understand the need for support first and foremost. | We need to find ways to enable more free world and incarcerated members to take action on advocacy requests. | Include advocacy requests in newsletters so that prisoners can advocate for each other. Build relationships with radical lawyers who can take cases. |

Vision for the Future: As we move our vision forward we have come up with great dreams and ways to change the programing. We need to constantly reflect on and evaluate our process. The voices of currently and formerly incarcerated folks need to be especially listened to. Some exciting new possibilities coming up include coordinating local visiting programs in Massachusetts, a hotline for prisoners to call into for support, strengthening work on school-to-prison pipeline, reaching women’s prisons, and securing consistent funding. You will see our obvious newest change with this newspaper. We are excited for the possibilities available to us with more printing space and less leg work on our end. Our great future is one without prisons, where we stop locking people in cages. Over this next year another piece of our work will be talking about how we take responsibility for causing harm, how to be involved in accountability processes, and how we create a safer world for all of us. Black and Pink works with all people in prison whether people be locked up on trumped up charges, frame-ups, drug offenses, sex offenses, murder, assault, or any other offense. We need to recognize that there are members of our family who have caused harm and how we as a family hold a responsibility to support transformation. Our vision is one of collective liberation, and accountability for causing harm is an essential part of that vision. -Johannes

Poems from the Heart

If I Ruled the World

If I ruled the world, there would be no more prisons!
No more chains, no more bars.
We would all ride bicycles, no more smog and smoke
That kills birds and obscures the stars.

If I ruled the world, the Palestinians
Would have a fully recognized State!
And not be bullied by Zionists
Who in reality are the perpetrators of Hate

If I ruled the world, Trayvon would still be Alive,
And Mr. Zimmerman would be held accountable
Instead of being coddled and cajoled for his heinous crime.

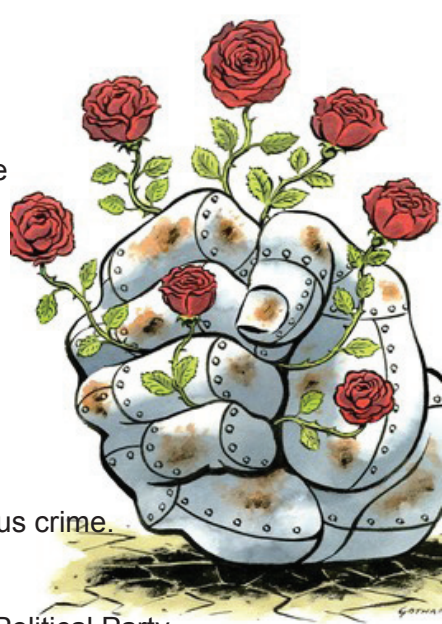
If I ruled the world, we would all be Free
And we wouldn't be tricked by a White Supremacist Political Party
That names itself TEA!

If I ruled the world, there would be equality all across the board,
The babies would have a chance
Instead of being sent off to make war!

If I ruled the world, the Imperialists would be in trouble.
Instead of oppressing the masses,
They'd be running from my AK
Trying to protect their sorry pathetic asses!

There once was a man names Mao who was as bright as the sun!
He said Freedom could be had
But only by the tip of the barrel of a gun!

By Comrade Malik,
N.A.B.P.P (New Afrikan Black Panther Party)
B&P Family Member



Mysterious Love

Love is an enigma, and the desires of one’s heart lead us through its mysterious realm. A path many have taken to find the true meaning of love. And although love may be evol, many have tried to conquer it.

Love is bitter, love is blind, but let your eyes and ears have thoughts so you may understand its mysteries.

Love is sweet, love is an eye opener, love is the emotion buried deep within that will show its true meaning. A shadow and a doubt may grow within our minds to guard out heart from this evol, but then this enigma could never be solved.

Although love may be bitter and sweet, kind and hurtful, we must all embark on its journey to find its true meaning. Love can never be eluded by our stubborn hearts, it will find its way in and then what will you do... Love an evol mystery, and evil emotion, but how wonderful it is.

By Joseph F. aka Jadea, Pennsylvania

Pain

I can feel your pain
We are on the same plane looking at the views
Listening to people’s attitudes
I can’t seem to get myself out of this groove
This pain is so real
All I want to do is die
Because I’m a man I can’t cry
Wishing you were here to dry my eyes
I feel all alone, left out in the cold
Chilled to the bone looking for a way home
My hopes, dreams, and visions is all I see
And I pray to God they go out to thee
Much Respect, Face, Washington



Black & Pink Pen-Pal Information Form

If you have not done so in the past 12 months (to reduce mail so we reply faster), please mail this form to **Black and Pink –Form**, and include a picture & “first letter” written to a potential new pen-pal for us to scan if you wish!

“I agree to this information being posted online.” Sign: _____ Date _____

Preferred Name: _____ Pronoun (she/he/ze): _____

Your Legal Name: _____ #: _____

Address: _____

Please check ☒ the types of pen-pal relationships you are interested in:
(Please note most “free world” pen-pals that visit our website are *not* interested in romantic or sexy letters)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Having a pen-pal friendship | <input type="checkbox"/> | Having a pen-pal romance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Writing about social justice or activism | <input type="checkbox"/> | Writing sexy/erotic letters |

Please provide this information if you want! People can search these items on our website:

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--------------|
| Age & Birth date | | / | / | In Solitary Confinement? | |
| Race | | | | Does anyone write you now? How many people write? | |
| Gender | | | | Specific types of pen-pals you are looking for: (<i>Most pen-pals want non-romantic friendships</i>) | |
| Sexuality | | | | | |
| Faith | | | | | |
| Non-English Language | | | | | |
| Release Date? | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Can you get mail from / write to <i>all other prisoners?</i> | Yes, I can! |
| HIV Status (<i>private</i>) | | | | | No, I can't! |

Tell us about who you are (for example, your background, hobbies and interests, beliefs, situation, etc!):

If you have a webpage: [www._____](#)
Do we have permission to display a picture of you from a corrections website? _____ Yes _____ No

Names and email addresses of any current pen-pals so we can involve them in Black and Pink:

Your address, email and phone upon release (if applicable) so that we can keep you involved in the family:

Messages to our Family & Pen-Pal Form

B&P Friends,

Fighting for others is the highest act a person can devote themselves to. As I read and re-read the many articles in B&P Newsletter, I’m constantly being moved and inspired at your selfless acts and determination to win over adversity, hate, and abuse. I congratulate you and offer up my support and at the same time I wish to express my sincerest gratitude for your courage to fight for myself and others. We live in a time of struggle and tremendous suffering across the world. We are an incarcerated people who chose not to completely focus on our personal suffering and inconveniences, but are compelled to compassionately consider helping people we have never met.

Speaking against a bully much larger than ourselves can be intimidating and even feel hopeless; however, I encourage you to press on, not ceasing even for a moment. Understand that Truth is the highest law because every wrong thing, word, action and intention must conform to truth, nothing survives it. Lies are always exposed and it’s time that this corrupt system’s lies be exposed, drawing attention to inhuman conditions, abuse, and hate. I just recently interviewed a c/o sgt. who asks to remain anonymous who explained to me the intensity of the CDOC training; being that he is responsible for training a number of the staff in firearms and martial arts and he is first hand creating their day to day mindset and overall framework of conduct. He stated to me that working for the Department is like becoming a mindless robot, because staff are told how to act and to remove themselves from the human element. This came across to me as odd and cold. Envision a world of mindless people, controlled by a machine, responsible for our lives, not willing to practice compassion for another’s place in life.

Friends, I see great strength in what we do in standing for each other’s rights. A voice is a powerful tool against adversity when used wisely and precisely. Please continue to tell your stories and share you experiences, there is wisdom there. The right people will hear you and will soon act on our behalf, be courageous, find tools to be heard, louder and clearer, where they have attempted to quench the human spirit, strive harder to allow that spirit to thrive.

Mississippi GLBTQ Examiner Tammy Rainey is a powerhouse of what I believe leadership should be in our community, her focus on civil rights is an example of what advocacy should be, and our manor in which we approach adversity. Knowledge of the law is a tool in some hands, and a weapon in another’s. We can create peace or chaos with our approach; no crook likes to be exposed, and is likely to retaliate. Be prepared friends to meet a great foe but understand the victory is worth the Battle.

-Asia Marie, Colorado
SGI Friends for World Peace

Dear Black & Pink,

This is my first time writing a letter to Black & Pink, and my brothers and sisters of the LGBTQI community. I must say I'm a bit nervous. My name is Cobey (AKA Casper), I am a 28 year old white Gay male, currently serving 35 years in the Texas prison system. Now I have read every Newsletter for the past few months, some I agree with, while others I do not, but that is not why I write this letter! I write this letter for one reason , and one reason only.

I wish to encourage and commend my Brothers and Sisters of the LGBTQI community. Everyone, but especially those behind the fences! Being a member of the LGBTQI community is always tough, with a world full of judgmental and hypocritical people. In prison it is ten times more so! Here you have “closet case” gays who will degrade us openly when they are around other people, yet try to get with you when they don't have to front! Worse than that are the people who simply hate us because of who we are. I have been jumped, beat up, degraded, neglected, and more simply because I am a proud gay man.

All I wish to say is, stay strong, stay true! Never be afraid, ashamed, or doubt who you are! Stay true to yourself above all others, and to hell with what others think about you. I myself wasted 24 years lying about myself simply because of what I thought my family would think. But no more! Never hide, show your pride, let the rainbow of your heart put some light into the world! Also when you see one of your brothers or sisters in need of support, don't hesitate, back to back, supporting one another is the only way we can make it!

Love Always,
Cobey (aka Casper), Texas

Tales of Resistance Sing

Sometimes it's hard to sing your own song when everyone else wants you to sing theirs. People can be full of advice about what you should do and when you should do it. And they usually mean well, but nobody can know exactly what's right for you except you. So I don't want to give you advice that you don't need, I just want to say have faith in yourself, within you lies some very special music, just waiting to be sung by you alone.

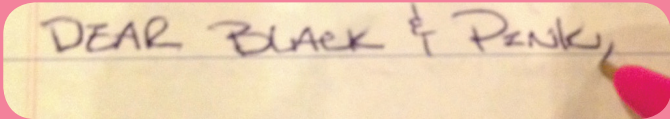
Sing

Sincerely,
Damian, Illinois

Dear Black & Pink,
I am writing in regard to the November 2012 issue, what Jasmine in California said. I am in a S.H.U. in California, and I too always try to bond our people together. So, if you're reading this, I bow to you because I could never have said it as well as you. So I too challenge us all to stop the petty conflicts and cattiness and meanness.
Everywhere I go I fight for our kind in every way possible. I am doing double life without, and I hope that someday we may meet. With that said, I send my deepest regards to all my family within the LGBTQ community.
Much Love & Respect,
Howard aka Beast, California

Dear Black & Pink Family,
My name is Sarah, and I'm a 33 year-old queer female from Indiana. I've been in solitary for four years now, so this will be my fifth Christmas being locked in a concrete bathroom, alone and cold, dancing and singing holiday tunes. I am happy to report that they have not yet figured out how to confiscate my joy.
It seems as if leftover cold turkey eaten after midnight transforms guards into gremlins determined to destroy our happiness. Before I even finish the chorus to "Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer," a guard hones in on me like a heat-seeking missile.
"No Singing!"
"No dancing!"
"No, you may not wear popcorn garland as a necklace!"
Once, a guard threatened to confiscate my handmade Santa hat. Feigning indignation, I ripped the red and white cap off my head and sulked away like a grounded teenager, doing my best not to laugh.
Last year, a female guard discovered a family of miniature snow people living outside beneath my cell window. I watched with a silent scream face as she kicked off their heads and stomped their tiny bodies to snow dust, grinning with glee the whole time.
When she returned inside wearing a smile, I told her she was evil.
She said, "I know."
Sarcastically I asked, "You know you need professional help, right?"
"Yeah, I know," she responded dryly.
In my chest I felt a pang of pity for her. Sadly, I think that her meanness is a direct product of working in the prison industrial complex. She gets paid to hold human beings hostage behind concrete walls and electrified fencing. Perhaps years of working in this abnormal environment has numbed her to the pain and grief of others.
How, I wonder, does a guard with no empathy for the systematic degradation and daily humiliation of prisoners parent his or her child? Can an individual with a heart two sizes too small have a healthy relationship with anyone at all? Do they even love themselves?
This time of year can bring out the worst in people, both in and out, but this is also a time full of hope and love and forgiveness. Just because someone is showing their ass doesn't mean you can't put on your best face. If they serve you lumpy oatmeal, toss your cell on Christmas, or move your lover away from you on New Year's Eve, let it go. Don't suffer their grinchiness. You have a choice, because suffering is a choice. Anger and tears only feed their greed and heighten their hatefulness. Instead, give the grinchies and gremlins in your life a gift; a heart full of compassion. If someone shushes your singing, destroys your decorations, or squashes your snow people, forgive them, for they live in a prison of their own making. You and I still have the choice to be joyful, so go ahead and have happy holidays, anyway.
Stay safe, be warm, and eat well. Love without fear, and above all, take good care of each other. We are all in this together.
In Solidarity,
Sarah Jo, Indiana

Addresses

| | |
|--|--|
| If you would like to request:  | Please use this topic tag, and we'll do our best: Black & Pink - topic tag c/o Community Church of Boston 565 Boylston St Boston, MA 02116 |
| Newsletter Subscriptions (Start or Stop) | Newsletter Subscriptions |
| Newsletter Submissions (Poems, Art & Stories) | Newsletter Submissions |
| "Outside" Free Pen-Pal Request (Please note: Pen-Pal Request Form will be in this newsletter quarterly) | Pen-Pal |
| Address Change (Will take time to update; at this time, we are mostly unable to send back issues.) | Address Change |
| Black & Pink Organization Feedback | Developing Leadership |
| Request Erotica | Erotica |
| Religious Support | Religion |
| Volunteering (Send thank you cards to donors, etc.) | Volunteer |
| Advocacy Requests (include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help) | Black & Pink -Advocacy, c/o The City School, 614 Columbia Rd, Dorchester MA 02125 (Please note: Only advocacy letters to this address; others will not receive a response, please use above.) |
| Art: Reed apologizes that the art project is currently not accepting artwork for sales until we have a solid volunteer base. You can send in artwork for use in the newseletter! Use topic tag Newsletter Submissions. Feel free to include a description of your drawing! | |

LEGAL: Consider writing to Lambda Legal for support or referrals with legal issues that you are having. "Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work." Lambda Legal, National Office 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005, 212-809-8585

New! Assistance with legal research and preparing for disciplinary and parole hearings. Hotline (9am-5pm EST): 617-495-3127, and by mail: Prison Legal Assistance Project, 6 Everett Street, Suite 5107, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA 02138

Another resource to turn to, if you can afford the subscription (\$24 yearly, payable with new stamps), is Prison Legal News. This resource was co-started by a former gay prisoner and Men Against Sexism organizer, Ed Mead, though now it is run by Paul Wright. You can reach them by writing to: Prison Legal News, P.O. Box 2420, West Brattleboro, VT 05303

SURVIVORS: Just Detention International provides support for prisoners who are survivors of sexual abuse. Write them at the legal address below for a packet. Each packet includes an introductory letter, a list of local resources, fact sheets, publications about recovery from sexual abuse, and a letter of hope from another survivor.
Ms. Chris Daley, Esq., 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340, Los Angeles, CA 90010